A Nocturne for Ukraine

Irpin’s auditorium is packed with chairs, it’s full of bricks and dust, twisted bones of blackened beams.

Pianist and page-turner sit outside. The piano stands haloed in patterned brick that’s slightly broken, the audience newsmen who hold up smartphones. A few daffodils, birches and a Christmas spruce, are ghosts of a garden where people once strolled in the interval. A pink pushchair with plastic toys is parked near burnt-out cars and cast-off curls of corrugated iron. The front portico stands, as if unaware all’s smashed behind. Darius bows, and lets the keys lament with energy and hope. My speech is music say his fingers. This nocturne’s a beautiful piece of night. We hear it sing for Mariupol, the shelled theatre, its roof gone, painted with big white letters, CHILDREN.

A cameraman hunches to his tripod. Under blasted trees, in flowerbeds of debris, hidden seeds are turning to the light.

Lithuanian pianist Darius Mazintas has performed Chopin’s nocturnes in front of Irpin’s destroyed House of Culture. Sky News, 28/4/22